

# Carer Support

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **1. What is Carer Support?**

Carer Support is a service funded by the Ministry of Health, Disability Services, designed to assist the unpaid full-time carer of a person with a disability to take a break from caring for a disabled person. A full time carer is someone who provides more than 4 hours a day unpaid care to a disabled person.

### **2. How do I Get Carer Support?**

The unpaid carer may self refer or be referred to Needs Assessment Service Coordination Service (NASC) Agency. Assessment of the carer's need for support will be considered in conjunction with the needs assessment of the disabled person they support.

There is no entitlement to a specific number of carer support days that can be allocated to the full-time carer.

There is an annual allowance that if exceeded, can only be allocated with the written approval of the DSD Service Manager for the area. Carer Support allocation is reviewed annually.

Carer Support days must be used within the 12 month period for which they were allocated. The allocated days cannot be carried over from one year to the next.

### **3. How Can I use Carer Support?**

Use of carer support days is subject to Carer Support Guidelines.

It is the full-time carer's right to choose and co-ordinate their relief support.

Carer Support can be used in half day, daily, weekly and/or a bulk block or any combination of these as long as the person does not exceed their annual allocation. A half day is defined as over 4 hours and up to 8 hours. A full day is 8 hours up to 24 hours.

Informal Carers provide relief care in an informal setting e.g. a family home. People who provide care are typically friends, neighbours, other people or some family members such as grandparent, grandchild, daughter, son, extended family members.

Formal Providers provide support in a formal/commercial setting and/or via an organisation. These providers include organisations such as rest homes, private and public hospitals, professional home workers, voluntary organisations, day care centres etc.

### **4. What is the Carer Support Subsidy Payment?**

Carer Support is a subsidy payment intended as a reimbursement towards the costs of providing relief support. Carer Support is not expected to cover the full costs associated with taking a break. Carer Support is not a salary, nor is it a wage.

*From November 2007 the rates are:*  
Informal Carers \$76 per day (GST exclusive) for a 24 hour period

Formal Providers \$85.50 per day (GST inclusive) for a 24 hour period

### **5. When Can Carer Support Not be Used?**

Relief must be provided to the full-time carer. It is not usually expected that relief is achieved where the full time carer remains in the presence of the disabled person while the relief takes place. However, the full-time carer may wish to stay in their home doing other things while the relief support is being provided.

#### ***Carer Support can not be used:***

- When the full time carer is at work
- If the support carer lives at the same address as the full-time carer
- If the support carer lives at the same address as the disabled person
- By the spouse, partners, parents and other full time carers, even if they do not live at the same address as the disabled person.
- To convalesce after discharge from hospital
- For any disabled person living full-time in MoH funded residential care services
- As part payment to attend parent retreat weekends
- By people who are entitled to payment covered by ACC
- Personal Health and Mental Health clients

### **6. Where Can I Get More Information about Carer Support?**

- [www.moh.govt.nz/disability](http://www.moh.govt.nz/disability)
- [www.taikura.org.nz](http://www.taikura.org.nz)
- HealthPAC freephone 0800 281 222

# Carer Support Subsidy

## *What is It and How Can We Use It?*

### ***History of the Carer Support Subsidy***

The Carer Support Subsidy was previously known as Aid to Families and then Alternative Care and was legislated into Parliament in 1976. Back then it was only available for families who had a disabled child under the age of 16 years. In 1993 there were significant changes made and if you were caring for a disabled person over the age of 16 years you could now access the Carer Support Subsidy. This was at a time when there was an entitlement to Carer Support regardless of actual need. It is now needs based. As would be expected the criteria to access Carer Support Subsidy has changed over the past 30 years.

Many parents are not aware that there is a policy relating to the use of the Carer Support Subsidy. This article is to ensure that all families have the same information.

Families need to know that Carer Support is a subsidy and this means that it is only a contribution to the full cost of care.

Although not stated specifically, the Guidelines are a Ministry of Health (MoH) policy document and HealthPac is responsible for the administration for Carer Support payments. Carers must adhere to government policy.

Families have been informed that as

of March 2008, the policy contained in the Carer Support Guidelines will be enforced by MOH HealthPac.

### ***Carer Support Subsidy Guidelines Inclusions***

Carer Support is available for the full-time unpaid carers of disabled people who have been assessed as eligible for the service by a Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination Service (NASC) Agency contracted by the Ministry of Health, Disability Services Directorate.

A person with a disability is someone who has been identified as having a physical, intellectual or sensory disability (or a combination of these) which is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in a reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required.

### ***Definition for a full-time carer (8.1)***

“The full-time carer must provide full-time unpaid support to the disabled person in the person’s own and/or family home. This excludes carers receiving payment from residential care services and disabled people who are receiving services from an alternative paid carer.”

### ***Things to keep in mind when using the Carer Support Subsidy***

Carer Support is needs based and accessed through a Needs Assessment.

Therefore depending on your assessed needs, the number of days allocated will vary for each person and could be any number of days. There is a limit to the days that the NASC can authorize. After this limit of days the allocation requires authorization from the MOH. You will need to discuss this with your service co-ordinator.

You cannot use your Carer Support Subsidy while you are at work to pay for the care of your disabled child, regardless of age.

If you are not at work i.e. you don’t work at all or you don’t work in the school holidays or you finish at 3pm, then you can use your Carer Support Subsidy to pay for the care of your son/daughter to attend camps and holiday programmes etc.



## *Carer Support Guidelines April 2005*

The following has been reprinted directly from the Carer Support Guidelines April 2005. It is reprinted here so that families have a clear understanding of what is contained in the Guidelines and so that they can ensure proper use of the Carer Support Subsidy.

### ***Ways in Which Carer Support Can be Used***

There are a variety of ways to utilise the days of Carer Support. These will vary according to the full-time carer and disabled person's needs and wishes. The full-time carer and disabled person are able to choose how they use their support days. It is the individuals' right to choose



and, in most instances, co-ordinate their relief support.

The service co-ordinator may assist with information and/or with coordination if required. She/he may have the flexibility to put together an appropriate package in a variety of combinations up to the number of days allocated (and taking into account other community support services the disabled person may be receiving). It needs to be remembered that the programme is designed for disabled people and carers to be supported to choose, arrange and monitor their own carer support over the year.

The carers of disabled people are able to access up to their maximum day allocation in a combination that suits their needs. Carer Support may be used in half day, daily, weekly and/or a bulk block, or any combination of these as long as the person does not exceed their annual allocation. (A half-day is defined as over 4 hours and up to 8 hours, and a full day is 8 hours to 24 hours).

Carer Support is a form of relief support and must therefore be provided in such a way that relief is actually given to the full-time carer. For example, it is not usually expected that relief would be achieved if the full-time carer remains in the presence of the disabled person while the relief takes place, however, the full-time carer may wish to stay in their home and engage in other activities while relief support is being provided.

Relief support should be delivered in appropriate environments if provided in formal settings (see 8.3 for definition of Formal Providers), where all possible

precautions have been taken to ensure the environment is safe. For example, disabled children should receive formal relief support in developmentally appropriate environments.

### ***Options May Include Respite Care***

Where the disabled person goes to another setting to receive the necessary support (e.g. a respite bed in a residential facility), or where a friend, or extended family member who is not a professional home worker provides the respite services in the disabled person's or relief carer's home.

Respite care may also include day activities, either half days or full days of activities, which will comprise a range of recreational and other activities. (While these provide relief to the carer they will also be stimulating for the disabled person). Regular ongoing access to day programmes should be separately accessed and not funded from Carer Support.

### ***School Camps, Holiday camps, etc.***

Only where the purpose is to provide respite for the carer and only if the full-time carer does not also attend the camp. Carer Support may contribute to the cost of the disabled person's support person, to camp fees or other expenses.

### ***Day Care Fees***

Carer Support may be used to place a disabled child in day care to allow the full-time carer some daytime relief, as long as the full-time carer is not engaged in paid work whilst the child receives day care.

*Bridget Snedden*